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Advancement of women

Proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007

Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women

Programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/60/L.17

Sixteenth report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the statement submitted by the Secretary-General (A/C.5/60/12) in accordance with rule 153 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly on the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/C.3/60/L.17, as orally revised, on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

2. As indicated in paragraph 2 of the Secretary-General's statement, under the terms of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would decide, inter alia, to authorize the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women:

(a) To hold three annual sessions of three weeks each, with a one-week pre-session working group for each session, effective from January 2006 as a temporary measure, instead of the two three-week annual sessions with a one-week pre-session working group for each session held under the current mandate; and

(b) To meet on an exceptional, temporary basis in 2006 and 2007 for up to seven days in parallel working groups during its third (July/August) annual session in 2006 and its first (January) and third (July/August) annual sessions in 2007 for the purpose of considering reports of States parties.

3. The Advisory Committee notes that these requests would give rise to additional requirements for the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 of: $739,600 under section 9, Economic and social affairs, including $505,700 for travel, per diem and terminal costs for the members of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and $233,900 for general temporary

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assistance; $8,689,800 under section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management, for conference servicing, interpretation and documentation; and $89,900 under section 28D, Office of Central Support Services, for support services. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided a detailed breakdown of the cost estimates for conference servicing under sections 2 and 28D.

4. The Secretary-General indicates in paragraph 5 of his statement that the additional session and parallel working groups would allow the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to consider a greater number of reports of States parties and to effectively eliminate the accumulated backlog of reports awaiting consideration.

5. In its discussions with representatives of the Secretary-General, the Advisory Committee was briefed on the status of the backlog of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Additional information on the process of reporting and the foreseen evolution of the backlog under both scenarios — two or three annual sessions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women — was also provided to the Advisory Committee on request. At the end of 2005, the reports of 65 States parties await consideration. While timely adherence to the reporting obligations according the terms of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women would result in the annual submission of 45 reports, based on past trends it is expected that at least 25 new reports will be received each year.

6. At present, during each three-week session, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women normally considers the reports of 8 States parties, a total of 16 per year. Under the new proposal for the 2006-2007 biennium, with an additional third session of the Committee each year and the establishment of two parallel working groups during the July/August 2006 and January and July/August 2007 sessions, it is expected that the Committee will be able to consider 31 reports in 2006 and 38 reports in 2007. This would lead to a gradual reduction of the backlog to 59 and 46 reports at the end of 2006 and 2007, respectively.

7. The Advisory Committee notes that accumulation of the backlog is a chronic problem and recalls that an extraordinary session of three weeks duration had also been requested in 2002 for the purpose of reducing the backlog of reports. At that time, the Advisory Committee had pointed out that, in its opinion, the reduction of the backlog would be only temporary and that the backlog could be eliminated only through the adaptation of the methods of work and reporting procedures of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the establishment of reporting guidelines for streamlining the structure, content and length of the reports of States parties.

8. **The Advisory Committee welcomes the efforts made to adapt the working procedures of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to accelerate the consideration of the reports of States parties, such as the meeting of that Committee in two parallel working groups, which effectively doubles the number of reports that can be considered during each session, from 8 to 16. However, the Advisory Committee points out that even with a third annual session, which is requested as an exceptional measure for the 2006-2007 biennium, the accumulated backlog would only temporarily be reduced from 65 reports at the end of 2005 to 46 at the end of 2007, and would**

in all likelihood increase again after 2007, when the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women resumes its normal cycle of meetings twice a year. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women intensify its efforts to explore methods of reforming its working and reporting procedures in a manner that would allow it to complete its work under the terms of its current mandate. Any savings achieved from a possible streamlining of documentation requirements, particularly under conference services, should be reflected in the performance report. It should be noted in this regard that requirements for conference services are estimated at "full cost" and will be revisited.

9. The Advisory Committee notes that additional resources requested for general temporary assistance under section 9, Economic and social affairs, of the proposed budget for the biennium 2006-2007 amount to $233,900, as noted in paragraph 7 of the Secretary-General's statement. It enquired whether the redeployment of existing resources within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had been considered to support the additional workload of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and was informed that it was not possible to determine the Department's ability to absorb these costs at this stage since its budget proposals for the 2006-2007 biennium are currently under consideration by the General Assembly.

10. **The Advisory Committee recommends that the Fifth Committee inform the General Assembly that, should it adopt draft resolution A/C.3/60/L.17, as orally revised, additional resources in the total amount of $9,519,300 would be required under the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007 as follows: section 9, Economic and social affairs ($739,600); section 2, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference management ($8,689,800); and section 28D, Office of Central Support Services ($89,900). Appropriation of this amount for the biennium 2006-2007 would be considered by the General Assembly in accordance with the procedures for the use and operations of the contingency fund.**